

OUR RESPECT
TO
MRS. AURORA A. QUEZON,
THE FIRST LADY OF THE LAND.

BY E. B. RODRIGUEZ

BAGUIO
APRIL 26, 1939

Dona Aurora A. Quezon —

Welcome and greetings
on her return to the land
of her birth!

E. B. Rodriguez

150 Sierra Madre St.,
Quezon City
1 January 1946

Wishing Dona Aurora A. Quezon
a very pleasant and a happy
birthday -

EB Rodriguez

Quezon City
19 February 1946

OUR RESPECT

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MRS. AURORA A. QUEZON,
The First Lady of the Land.

HER CONVERSATION WITH MESSRS. AUG.
MONTILLA, A. MONTILLA, E. B.
RODRIGUEZ, AND L. MONTILLA.

MR. E. B. RODRIGUEZ SUMMARIZED THE
CONVERSATION.

BAGUIO
April 26, 1939

MRS. QUEZON'S VARIED VIEWS EXPRESSED IN
WORDS OF WIDE HUMAN COMPREHENSIBILITY

It was a delightful conversation we had with the First Lady of the Land when in a delightful morning in Baguio we visited Mrs. Quezon to pay our respects to her.

In Baguio, where life is quieter and more contemplative and where one may have the delight of a pause, one can have a better chance to speak to her than in Malacañan where the situation is quite different because of her crowded hours.

Our conversation touched on varied subjects. We strolled, figuratively speaking, over a wide countryside, examining the varied landscapes as we passed. She expressed to us her life's views from various angles in words of wide human comprehensibility.

With amazing candor she spoke to us on something real, native to her character and derived from what she has seen and felt and thought. Indeed, it was an adventure, a voyage

so to speak, into the realm of colorful thoughts, of wit, of creative ideas.

I jot down the gist of what she said:
I ~~do~~ always advise my daughters to study hard. By concentrating their minds in their studies no foolish ideas will have the chance to creep into their heads. Their study is a preparation to real life - to meet future unforeseen eventualities.

I tell them we are not rich. While we are alive, we are giving them all the opportunities that education can afford. In the future when they get married, should it happen that their husbands, for causes which are not of their own making, can not have enough income to support their families, they should be ready and able to take their place and earn what is necessary for the expenses of the family.

I do not want my daughters to be society girls. When one is a society girl, she would not seem to have enough work to do at home.

When a girl is not busy working or studying, as a general rule, foolish ideas enter into her head. She oftentimes becomes love-foolish, or suffers from foolish love. This usually leads to future disappointments.

I know this possibility is not ~~a~~ far-fetched. And let me give you two concrete examples. I have a friend who has a daughter who separated from her husband, because of political feuds between their parents. The husband was sent to the States to study. The wife was, naturally, taken back by her parents. She, of course, has all the food she needs, but at the same time she needs extra money for her own personal expenses and that of her child. It is, you know, quite embarrassing for her to ask those expenses from her parents. Fortunately in her school days, she finished the eight-grade piano teacher's course. So she could give piano lessons in her house. Consequently, she did not only earn enough for her needs and those of her child, but

she was also able to save a little for the rainy days. Had she not had this vocational preparation where should she and her child be!

There is another concrete example that I could give along the same line. The wife of a distinguished public official, who occupied several positions of distinction in the past, had to teach while her husband was waiting to be appointed to a position which is not below his category. Had she not, while in a foreign country, taken up home economics in her spare moments which later proved their salvation, what would have become of them?

Hence, I always emphasize this as a serious matter in my conversations with my daughters. I am preparing them for future life's grim realities. Preparedness now is the answer to life's unforeseen eventualities. They should be prepared to face their future without worry and without fear.

My eldest daughter is taking up law. She is fond of all subjects, but she does not

care very much ^{for} ~~of~~ mathematics; while my younger daughter is very fond of mathematics and finds exceptional pleasure in solving complicated problems. ~~that most Filipina girls would not care to attempt.~~ She is taking up her A. B. course majoring in ^{English} mathematics. My son is attending the La Salle College. He has not yet shown his preferences. Perhaps he is too young to choose his life's vocation.

Both my daughters are exceptionally strong in social science subjects, such as sociology, psychology and philosophy. They are wide readers and find solace in reading and studying their lessons. They are attending the summer classes here in Baguio under special tutors - their professors in the University of Santo Tomas, so that even if they travel abroad with me for eight months or so, they will not get behind their studies. Their university professors are Rev. Evergisto Bazaco, O. P., in philosophy; Rev. Ciriaco Pedrosa, O. P., in mathematics; Rev. ^V Jesus Balbuena, O. P., in economics; Rev. ^V Aurelio Balbuena, O. P., in law; Rev. Porfirio

REV. Jose Ortea, O.P.

~~Diaz; and Rev. Juan Illa, O. P., in Roman law.~~

It is interesting to note Father Bazaco's experience in his class. He is their professor in philosophy. There are, naturally, dull and bright students in any class, ~~but more of the dull ones.~~ But Father Bazaco has no patience with the dull ones. He advances his classes regularly with the consequence that these dull ones can not catch up with the lessons. If the bright ones are separated from the dull ones, it would be to the disadvantage of the latter as they would be deprived of the benefit derived from hearing and having intelligent recitations and discussions.

My daughters enjoy discussing with their professors, especially in philosophy. One of the humorous questions asked by my elder daughter is this:

Miss Q - "Is Judas in Heaven or in Hell?"

P - "None can tell where he is exactly just now."

Miss Q - "I can give you a definite answer

to this question later. When I go
to Heaven I will send for him and tell
him what a nice place Heaven is!"

I have told my daughters that while they
are learning from books everyday, I am also
learning everyday, not from books but from
human experience. Everyday I am studying and
observing individuals; I am studying and observ-
ing peoples - those who succeed as well as those
who fail. I analyze the causes, the reasons of
their success as well as their failures. Like-
wise, I am observing and studying myself, and I
note the mistakes I make and the improvements I
gain. With all the strength of my will, I at-
tempt not to make the same mistakes twice. Hence,
I also study in school - in the school of life.
I also study from books - the books of human ex-
perience. I believe my study is more effective
in its result than my daughters.

With reference to the particular point
that she always tries with all her will never
to make the same mistakes twice, we put in the

remark that it was a lesson which should be learned by nations as well as by individuals, that if every nation of the world will only attempt not to make the same mistake twice we shall have no fear of war. On this she enlarged and expressed herself as follows: Yes, nations nowadays commit the same errors which their rulers committed in the past. Because they are living in a different epoch and because their procedure is modernized they believed that what they are doing is different from what their predecessors did when they plunged the world into the war. But in reality the fundamentals are the same. Simply because the epoch is different and the procedure is different, it does not mean that the fundamental must be different. It remains the same. Hence, the saying: "History repeats itself."

~~Her views on love find expression in~~
~~Ludwig, who says: "Love is always a gamble.~~
~~Under the green wood tree or before the altar,~~

Love is always a gamble.

~~with embraces or with golden rings, it is
nothing but a toss-up, and chance rules it all."~~

Like a stream that must wind its way through hills and valleys and forests and fields before reaching the sea, the conversation has touched upon the shores of varied subjects.

Now the theme has been shifted to books and libraries with their infinite riches for the intellect - and to the unassuming librarians - our library builders who, like our corals, silently and consistently build and build, collecting, sorting, classifying, indexing all sorts of printed literature for conservation, for the use of the readers and for the use of the nation.

By nature and by inclination as well as by love, Mrs. Quezon is a librarian. She loves the work of the librarian. She loves the books the librarian collects. Books inspire, entertain, educate; they are "the children of the mind of men and women who have long passed

from the human scene." She reads her books up to the depth of the night. They are her sincere and uncomplaining friends who are mainly concerned with the broadening of one's horizon, the cultivation of the mind and soul, and the appreciation of spiritual values.

Mrs. Quezon was, indeed, one of the earliest pioneer librarians we have in the Philippines - in fact as early as some two and a half decades ago. She was the librarian of the Baler Reading Circle in her historic little town of Baler, nestled between the Sierra Madres and the Pacific. She had the teachers and students of Baler at the time as her readers. Like the ways of all librarians, she was happy when the books borrowed were duly returned, and ~~she~~ peeved when they were lost or not duly returned - not to say getting them back with pages missing!

She continued: "I studied in the Philippine Normal School in my younger days. It was then located at the now Philippine General

Hospital grounds, and the Normal School Girls Dormitory was on Flores Street, Ermita. I began in the first grade. I had been promoted so frequently from time to time and to such an extent that in two years I was already in the sixth grade. An American teacher had taken special interest in the excellent progress of my school work and in my promotion. I did not only study the lessons assigned for the day but also those for the next several days or so. Seeing the necessity and merit of promoting me and not letting me be dragged back by my classmates who had not made better showing, I was practically catapulted into the different grades up to sixth. ^{carage by mistake,} ~~My school record was excellent.~~ I tell this to my daughters whenever I ask them to study well.

" I love books. If I lose my jewels, I simply take their loss for granted. But not so with my books. If I lose one or cannot locate it, I create all sorts of trouble until I find it, or it is located for me.

"Books are my priceless possessions. I love them better than my jewels. One evening the President had been looking for a book, the "Sitio de Baler," and went to my library to get it. But he could not open the shelves as they are all locked. The next morning he asked me why I locked my shelves as he could not get the book he needed. I told him I locked the shelves because I do not want to lose my books.

"My love for books began since I attended school in my younger days. I preserved some of the textbooks I used in my studies. They are still with me.

"When I taught in ^{my own house boys and girls} ~~the school~~ of our hometown of Baler, ⁹ ~~we the teachers~~ organized a reading circle, and we organized a library for the use of the teachers as well as the students. I was elected the librarian of the circle. I listed all the books that we had, and I required every borrower to sign his name on a notebook, and to write therein the title of the book he borrowed. I also required him to pay a fine

of five centavos a day if he failed to return the book on time. I still have these books in my possession."

Her Home Library has a collection of two thousand volumes, mostly on Filipiniana and literature on various subjects properly catalogued, classified and indexed.

She resumed: "There was a humorous incident that happened when I was the librarian of that Reading Circle which I already mentioned. The Library was open from ten to twelve in the morning and three to four in the afternoon. We had a meeting and one of the subjects discussed was the improvement of the library service. A reader stood up and said, 'Mr. Chairman, I move that the librarian be opened from three to six in the afternoon everyday instead of from three to four.' A burst of laughter resounded in the room. When everything was calm I stood up and said, 'What you meant is to open the library from three to six in the afternoon and not the librarian.'

"I am also preserving all the letters of my husband and scraps of his writing, postal cards, notes, telegrams and cables which he had been sending me for myself and for my children. And I began keeping them even when he was yet a Resident Commissioner. Hence, I have a complete collection of all the letters he wrote ~~to~~ me. Unfortunately, however, the letters I wrote to him are not in his possession, so they are not with me."

Mrs. Quezon showed us an enlarged picture of the town of Baler taken way back in 1916, which was placed on the wall facing the entrance of her Baguio Mansion. It was an enlarged snapshot taken at that time and focused on the plaza of the town and showing some homes including Mrs. Quezon's home, the church, the tower separated from the church, both of nipa roof, the people coming home after attending the Sunday mass, with ladies dressed in the 1916 style of "the rounded serpentina," one of whom was Mrs. Quezon. It must be one of the

pictures dear to her heart, being a souvenir photograph of her historic little town taken more than two decades ago, and of the very spot where she and the President saw the first light of day. Whether they are in Malacañan Palace or in the Great metropolis of Washington, Paris, London, the little town of their birth is always in their mind.

Baler formerly belonged to the province of Nueva Ecija. For military reasons the district of Principe (composed of Casiguran, Depaulao and Baler) was created by the Spanish authorities in 1858 with Baler as the capital. The military service in the district was under the charge of the officials of the Spanish Army. The civil, judicial and economic administration was, however, under the province of Nueva Ecija. The Franciscan Fathers were in charge of the souls of those towns in the district. Later they were turned over to the Recollect Fathers who much later transferred them again to the Franciscans.

The Siege of Baler

On June 27, 1898, the Spanish garrison in Baler composed of four officers and fifty men, noticing the townspeople abandoning the town knew that trouble was in store for them. They then fixed up their quarters in the church and in the convent. The church although small like a chapel, was however, strongly built with thick walls, and this, together with the convent, could serve as real fort for their garrison. The soldiers placed in the church all their ammunition and a moderate amount of supplies including seventy cavanos of rice.

We should recall that, prior to America's occupation of the Philippines, there were about eighteen thousand Spanish soldiers posted all over the country in small garrisons. When General Aguinaldo returned to the Philippines from Hongkong on board the McCullough in May, 1898, the Spanish garrisons in Luzon were at once besieged by the Filipino Revolutionary soldiers. Overpowered by the sheer force of

numbers, the Spanish officers and soldiers were either captured or they surrendered. An exception however to these captures and surrenders was made by the Spanish defense of Baler. The sound of Dewey's guns rang around the world on May 1, 1898. Manila was occupied on August 13 of the same year. Yet for nearly twelve months after those stirring events, the Spanish flag remained floating on the church-tower of Baler. On June 27, 1898, four Spanish officers and fifty men went into the church until June 2, 1899, when two officers and thirty-one men marched out of it. All representations made to the garrison that the Philippines had passed to the United States and therefore no longer belonged to Spain, were rejected as a mere ruse intended to cause their surrender at the mercy of their enemies. The garrison had been deceived so many times that even the Spanish officer who was sent as an emissary from General Rios in Manila was not listened to. Not until June 2, 1899, when the

lieutenant of the garrison, Saturnino Martin Cerezo found time to glance over the headlines of the newspapers thrown into their quarters by the emissary from the Spanish authorities in Manila, did the garrison realize that they had been completely out of touch with the outside world for one year, and that among other things that had happened was that Cuba, Porto Rico and the Philippines were lost to Spain and that the only Spanish flag floating in Luzon for almost a year was the one on their church - Baler. Lieutenant Martin explained the situation to his men, then a truce with the Filipino Revolutionary Army had been instituted, and negotiations were entered into at once, and the valient soldiers, much depleted, marched out of the church. Let us add that upon reaching Spain, the Queen Regent in the name of Alfonso II presented to these heroic soldiers "La Cruz de Honor de San Fernando" carrying with it a pension.

Early Baler

Rev. F. Felix de Huerta in his Estado Geografico de la Provincia de San Gregorio Magno printed in Manila in 1865, described Baler in this wise:

"Baler enjoys a salutary, fresh and breezy climate. They provide themselves with drinking water from the river above cited (San Jose). The roads to border towns are bad, and during the rainy season they are extremely bad. This circumstance makes life insecure for the numerous infidels who live in those thickets, especially towards Casiguran and Binañgonan. For this reason, and for the defense of the town, the Rev. Father Fray José de Esparragosa, built two castles in 1847, one on top of the mountain, and the other on the opposite side of the river, adjoining the shores, both of which structures were erected under the direction of the said priest and at the expense and help of the town. The mails are received from the provincial capital occasionally and far between.

"The church under the protection of the Bishop S. Luis was originally made of bamboo and nipa, and later constructed of masonry. This was, however, ultimately reduced to ruins by the increasing sea waves already mentioned. Lastly, the church, like the convent, was constructed of stone, and this is what exists to-day. The other houses, including the court-house where a school endowed out of the community coffers is located, are made of bamboo, of local style. The church is at present - 1865 - administered by the Rev. Father Fray Pascual Salvador, preacher, twenty-five years of age.

The State of the Parochial Church

Tributes	327
Souls	1,367

"The immense land that this town possesses is very appropriate for all kinds of production, but the inhabitants cultivate only a small portion which hardly produces enough rice and corn for their consumption. In the year 1846, the already mentioned Father Esparragosa, after

overcoming numerous difficulties, opened a canal of more than one mile in length, capable of irrigating land for five or six thousand tributes. However, not more than twenty persons take advantage of this great benefit, and if they do, these are on a short scale. Their extensive and luxuriant forests produce all kinds of lumber, bamboos, palms, rattan, hunting and fowling, wax and honey. If they be ignorant as to the existence of these resources, it is because the religious orders have explored but a minimum portion of the forests. Along its coasts exquisite fish may be found, especially sardines and tunny-fish, which undoubtedly are of the best quality in these Islands. The bay above mentioned is a good port for all kinds of vessels since it has from twelve to sixty fathoms in depth, and its mouth offers no danger except at the point in the south called "Enchanted," where there are various reefs called "Dainties." These vessels can easily save themselves by going around the point

within a distance of two miles.

"The natives dedicate themselves to agriculture, fishing, collection of wax and to hunting. They transport their produce to the market of Gapan and even to the capital (San Isidro). In spite of the antiquity of this town, its fine climate and the fertility of its soil, it seems, however, destined to be eternally a small town. Upon comparing the various records in our archives, we find that the births are three times greater than the number of deaths. In spite of this fact, however, there seems to be no progress in the growth of the population. The cause is the exodus of many families in search of fields to till in other towns although their own remain untouched."

The Philippines Historical Committee has prepared three markers for Baler: The Church of Baler, Roster of the Loyal Spanish Garrison at the Siege of the Church of Baler, and Lieut. Gilmore Rescue Party.

The conversation here shifted to Baler, its schools, its problem of transportation with the rest of the province, the attempt of Nueva Vizcaya provincial officials to have it ceded to and incorporated with Nueva Vizcaya. The following are from Mrs. Quezon's account:

"I was in Baler in 1916. We erected its school by public contribution. The town people furnished the materials, like boards, lumber, etc., the people freely contributing their time and labor.

"I found the officials of Nueva Vizcaya province in Baler who had already succeeded in securing the consent of the inhabitants of Baler to the cession of their town to Nueva Vizcaya. In the public meeting I stood up and said, 'What can you officials of Nueva Vizcaya give to Baler which the province of Tayabas cannot give? In the first place Tayabas is a first class province with plenty of resources and Baler can get anything it needs from her. (That was the time of the coconut boom.)

Whereas Nueva Vizcaya is merely a special province. It cannot even elect its governor and municipal presidents. If the Baler people want to convert their town into township like the towns in Nueva Vizcaya where their officials are not elected but only appointed, it is up to the Baler people. But let me say that I see no benefit in this change. It is trading local independence or autonomy with autocracy."

Then the people of Baler began to ask:
"Ano ba ang kahulugan ng township? Tao at saka 'sheep', ano ang ibig sabihin niyan?"
"Pues iyan ñga, kayong nga taga Baler ay gagawing 'sheep' (tupa, taong walang isip) ng mga taga Nueva Vizcaya; mawawalan kayo ng libertad na gaya ng tinatamo ninyo ngayon."

"The lack of transportation facilities between Baler and other towns is not due to the fact that Tayabas province cannot or does not wish to extend these facilities but to the circumstance that the ocean is so rough and turbulent for six months that Baler can

only be reached during the other six months of the year."

The conversation at this point touched upon the visit of His Excellency, the President, to the North, wherein we expressed our anxiety to learn the truth of what was published in the papers that he succumbed from the effect of excessive heat before reaching the tunnel in Abra. Mrs. Quezon related:

"Yes, the trip had been very hard for the President. It was too strenuous for him. Upon reaching Santa Maria where he was made to alight from his car and had to walk quite a distance in order to hear the choir that was to sing in his honor at the patio of the church. The President could not disappoint the people and he granted their request. He had to walk in the sun for some distance, and his exposure to the intense heat subsequently made him feel bad for quite a while until we reached that little hut before the entrance to the tunnel where he laid down in a papag

just big enough to fill the little space and from where we sent for ice and applied it to him."

One of us remarked: "In the United States, the President must be well guarded as it is dangerous for him to sleep in a cottage like that."

Doña Aurora answered, "In the United States the people shoot their president, but in the Philippines the people love their president. Here the president can associate with the people, walk among them, visit places and none attempts to kill him."

We replied, "Our president has a very big heart. The people love him and they will do whatever is within their power not only to protect him but also to serve him at any time. He is one of the people. So he loves them so much and never refuses their wishes even at the peril of his health."

Mrs. Quezon continued, "Let it not be said that because the president is my husband

I am stating this: He is the man who is not afraid to recognize any mistake he has done. Whenever he comes to know that he committed wrong against anyone, he never hesitates to ask forgiveness, whether that one is a muchacho or a laborer in the street. He does not believe that he is belittling himself when he recognizes his errors. Accordingly he corrects them.

"He forgives and forgets easily whatever wrong others have done to them. When his attention would be called by his friends and he was asked why he was appointing so and so to this elevated position, and so and so to that high office when they were his bitter enemies who acrimoniously criticized him in the H-H-C controversy, he would answer: "I am doing this not for my personal self but for the best interest of the nation. The life of M. L. Q. is not eternal. He has but few years to live. But the life of the nation goes on forever. So it is the nation that should concern our interest. Not M. L. Q."

Very well said. Could there be any better expression of the inner soul of the man?

"My religion? Yes, my religion is dearest in my life. It is life itself. I cannot change my religion. If, perchance, a powerful man comes to me and says, 'Change your religion lest I'll kill you.' I will tell him, 'I can never change my religion. It is my life. It is dearer than my own life. I prefer to be killed than to change it.'

To her, "Religion is the final center of repose; the goal to which all things tend; apart from which man is a shadow, his very existence a riddle, and the stupendous scenes of nature which surround him as unmeaning as the leaves which the sybil scattered in the wind."

On her recent pleasure trip to foreign countries she said, "The President told me that if the children and I leave away he will abandon Malacañan as it will be too big for him alone to stay there. He will either stay in Pasay or in the Casiana. 'I have been

used to leaving my family home but not my family leaving me.' Hence the trip has to be postponed - for other better time.'"

Advising one who, because of luck or otherwise, had united himself in wedlock with a foreigner especially with an American, she said that the best norm of conduct to be followed is to stay in the United States and never bring the family in the Philippines except for brief visits, so that his wife can see the actual conditions of his folks and of his home. Likewise, in speaking to his wife about Philippine life, he should not picture only its bright sides and he should be careful not to exaggerate so that the disappointment will not be so marked or so shocking. He should not forget that there are factors in this matter that cannot be disregarded - the environment, the differences in the sanitary practices of both peoples, not to mention the economic problem which will surely arise as the high standard of living

to which the wife has been accustomed should be satisfied.

Hence a Filipino-American couple should have in mind what Chaucer said:

"Thou shall make castles then in Spain
And dream of joy, all but in vain."

We came to visit her in order to pay our respects. It was with unspeakable joy in our hearts.

The visit was a splendid treasury of deep thought, of life, of history, of literature, of charming conversations.

E N D

/egs

Eulogio B. Rodriguez
Baguio, 26 April 1939.